

IN THE CLAIMS:

Amend claims 2-5 and 8 to read as follows:

Claim 1 (canceled)

2. (Currently amended) A method of selling and purchasing at least one object of purchase over a computer network, said method comprising the following steps:

a. utilizing a software program on a computer of a purchaser to search for and find a site on said computer network offering said at least one object of purchase;

b. browsing through an on-line catalog at said site to find said at least one object of purchase, each of said at least one object of purchase having attributed to it a probability of obtaining said each of said at least one object of purchase at no cost to said purchaser, wherein said probability is communicated to the purchaser prior to selecting said at least one object for purchase;

c. selecting said at least one object of purchase for purchase;

d. confirming an order for said at least one object of purchase;

e. determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one object of purchase; and

f. paying for only those objects of purchase from said at least one object of purchase for which payment was determined to be required in step e,

wherein said step of determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one object of purchase comprises the following steps:

(1) [a.] determining the number of said each of said at least one object of purchase ordered since an event selected from the group of events consisting of:

(i) said each of said at least one object of purchase was delivered at no cost to a prior purchaser; and

(ii) said each of said at least one object of purchase was first offered for sale;

(2) [b.] offering said each of said at least one object of purchase to said purchaser at no cost if said number is equal to predetermined value; and

(3) [c.] requiring payment for said each of said at least one object of purchase if said number is not equal to said predetermined value.

3. (Currently amended) A method of selling and purchasing at least one object of purchase over a computer network, said method comprising the following steps:

a. utilizing a software program on a computer of a purchaser to search for and find a site on said computer network offering said at least one object of purchase;

b. browsing through an on-line catalog at said site to find said at least one object of purchase, each of said at least one object of purchase having attributed to it a probability of obtaining said each of said at least one object of purchase at no cost to said purchaser, wherein said probability is communicated to the purchaser prior to selecting said at least one object for purchase;

c. selecting said at least one object of purchase for purchase;

d. confirming an order for said at least one object of purchase;

e. determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one object of purchase; and

f. paying for only those objects of purchase from said at least one object of purchase for which payment was determined to be required in step e,

wherein said step of determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one object of purchase comprises the following steps:

(1) [a.] generating a random number between a first predetermined value and a second predetermined value for said each of said at least one object of purchase;

[a.] ~~generating a random number between a first predetermined value and a second predetermined value for said each of said at least one object of purchase;~~

(2) [b.] offering said each of said at least one object of purchase to said purchaser at no cost if said random number is equal to a third predetermined value; and

(3) [c.] requiring payment for said each of said at least one object of purchase if said random number is not equal to said third predetermined value.

4. (Currently amended) A method of selling and purchasing at least one object of purchase over a computer network, said method comprising the following steps:

a. utilizing a software program on a computer of a purchaser to search for and find a site on said computer network offering said at least one object of purchase;

b. browsing through an on-line catalog at said site to find said at least one object of purchase, each of said at least one object of purchase having attributed to it a probability of obtaining said each of said at least one object of purchase at no cost to said purchaser, wherein said probability is communicated to the purchaser prior to selecting said at least one object for purchase;

c. selecting said at least one object of purchase for purchase;  
d. confirming an order for said at least one object of purchase;  
e. determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one object of purchase; and

f. paying for only those objects of purchase from said at least one object of purchase for which payment was determined to be required in step e,

wherein said step of determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one object of purchase comprises the following steps:

(1) [a.] determining a series of whole numbers for said each of said at least one object of purchase after a first event selected from the group of events consisting of:

(i) said site is ready to sell for the first time said each of said at least one object of purchase; and

(ii) a first predetermined number of said each of said at least one object of purchase have been ordered after a second event selected from the group of events consisting of:

- (a) said site is ready to sell for the first time said each of said at least one object of purchase; and
- (b) determining a series of whole numbers as specified in this step 1 [a.], said series of whole numbers being between one and said first predetermined number,

said series of whole numbers having as many numbers as the integral part of the quotient of said first predetermined number divided by a second predetermined number;

- (2) [b.] offering said each of said at least one object of purchase to said purchaser at no cost if the number of said each of said at least one object of purchase ordered since step (1) [a.] was last performed is equal to one of said series of whole numbers; and

- (3) c. requiring payment for said each of said at least one object of purchase if said number of said each of said at least one object of purchase ordered since step (1) [a.] was last performed is not equal to any of said series of whole numbers.


5. (Currently amended) A method of selling and purchasing at least one object of purchase over a computer network, said method comprising the following steps:

- a. utilizing a software program on a computer of a purchaser to search for and find a site on said computer network offering said at least one object of purchase;
- b. browsing through an on-line catalog at said site to find said at least one object of purchase, each of said at least one object of purchase having attributed to it a probability of

obtaining said each of said at least one object of purchase at no cost to said purchaser,  
wherein said probability is communicated to the purchaser prior to selecting said at least one  
object for purchase;

- c. selecting said at least one object of purchase for purchase;
- d. confirming an order for said at least one object of purchase;
- e. determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one  
object of purchase; and
- f. paying for only those objects of purchase from said at least one object of  
purchase for which payment was determined to be required in step e,

wherein said step of determining whether payment must be made for said each of said  
at least one object of purchase comprises the following steps:

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- (1) [a.] determining a series of of [or] whole numbers for said each of said at least  
one object of purchase after a first event selected from the group of  
events consisting of:
    - (i) said site is ready to sell for the first time said each of said at least one  
object of purchase; and
    - (ii) a first predetermined number of said each of said at least one object of  
purchase have been ordered after a second event selected from the group  
of events consisting of:
      - (a) said site is ready to sell for the first time said each of said at  
least one object of purchase; and

(b) determining a series of whole numbers as specified in this step

(1) [a.], said series of whole numbers being between one and  
said first predetermined number,

said series of whole numbers having as many numbers as the integral  
part of the quotient of said first predetermined number divided by a  
second predetermined number;

(2) [b.] generating a random number between zero and a first number of said  
each of said at least one object of purchase that must be ordered in the  
future for a second number of said each of said at least one object of  
purchase ordered since step (1) [a.] was last performed to equal the least  
of said series of whole numbers which is greater than a fourth number  
of said each of said at least one object of purchase actually ordered  
since step (1) [a.] was last performed, said generation of said random  
number being performed for said each of said at least one object of  
purchase;

(3) [c.] offering said each of said at least one object of purchase to said  
purchaser at no cost if said random number is equal to zero; and

(4) [d.] requiring payment for said each of said at least one object of purchase is  
said random number is not equal to zero.

Claims 6 and 7 (canceled)

8. (Currently amended) A system for selling at least one object of purchase over a computer network, said system comprising:

- a. an on-line catalog;
- b. a virtual shopping basket; and
- c. software for determining whether a particular one of said at least one object of purchase shall be offered free to a purchaser,

wherein said software comprises:

- (1) [a.] a program to produce a user interface allowing a merchant to select one of at least one algorithm for determining whether a particular one of said at least one object of purchase shall be offered free to said purchaser, said selection being with regard to one object of purchase in said on-line catalog and said at least one algorithm comprising a regular cycle algorithm, a constant probability algorithm, a pre-defined list algorithm and a dynamic probability algorithm, wherein said software communicates to said purchaser a probability that said particular said object of purchase will be offered free to said purchaser prior to selection by said purchaser of said at least one object for purchase;
- (2) [b.] said at least one algorithm; and
- (3) [c.] a program to produce a user interface displaying to a merchant the particular one(s) of said one object of purchase in said on-line catalog offered free to purchasers.